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~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

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~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~ 201115Z OCT 72 VIA CAS CHANNELS (BUNKER)
FROM: HARRY A. KISSINGER SAIGON 0202 FLASH
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR GENERAL HAIG
RAXTO 24 OCTOBER 23, 1972

I MET WITH THIEU AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, AUGMENTED BY GENERAL VIEN, FOR THREE AND A HALF HOURS. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE EMOTION AT BOTH SIDES OF THE TABLE AND SKEPTICISM, BUT IT WAS NOT REPEAT NOT A CONFRONTATION. THEY RAISED A LONG SERIES OF PROBLEMS AND POINTS FOR CLARIFICATION. THESE WERE REPRESENTED AS INEQUITIES OR DIFFICULTIES, BUT THE PLAN ITSELF WAS NEVER REJECTED. NEITHER WAS IT ACCEPTED.

IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE SOBER, SOMEWHAT SAD, MOOD OF THE SESSION THAT THEY ARE HAVING GREAT PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTY WITH CUTTING THE AMERICAN UMBILICAL CORD. THEY PROBABLY REALIZE THAT THE DEAL IS A GOOD ONE BY AMERICAN STANDARDS, BUT THEIR FOCUS IS ON REMAINING NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLATIONS OF THE AGREEMENT. WHILE THEY SHOWED PRIDE IN THE TALENTS OF THEIR GENERALS, THEY CONTINUED TO EXHIBIT AWE OF COMMUNIST CUNNING AND A LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE. THEY UNDOUBTEDLY FEEL THEY NEED MORE TIME, BUT ONE SENSES THEY WILL ALWAYS FEEL THAT WAY. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE TO DO AND IT IS VERY PAINFUL. THEY ARE PROBABLY EVEN RIGHT. IF WE COULD LAST TWO MORE YEARS THEY WOULD HAVE IT MADE.

AGAINST THIS MOOD I DID MY BEST TO UNDERLINE THEIR INHERENT ADVANTAGES, DRAW OUT THEIR SELF CONFIDENCE AND ASSURE THEM OF US BACKING, BOTH DURING AN AGREEMENT AND IN THE FACE OF VIOLATIONS. I WAS PARTLY, NOT TOTALLY SUCCESSFUL.

I HAVE THE SENSE THAT THEY ARE SLOWLY COMING ALONG AND ARE WORKING THEMSELVES INTO THE MENTAL FRAME OF ACCEPTING THE PLAN, BUT THEIR SELF-RESPECT REQUIRES A SENSE OF PARTICIPATION. I AM MEETING TOMORROW MORNING WITH A TASK FORCE FROM THE COUNCIL, INCLUDING THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND AMBASSADORS LAM AND PHUONG, TO GO OVER THE PROVISIONS OF THE TEXT. I SHALL MEET THIEU AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL TOMORROW AFTERNOON. THE PROSPECT IS THAT WE WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WITH SOME MORE CHANGES.

THEIR OBJECTIONS AND QUESTIONS, NONE OF THEM CAPRICIOUS, CENTERED ON NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES REMAINING IN THE SOUTH; CLARIFICATIONS ON THE INFILTRATION AND REPLACEMENT PROVISIONS; QUESTIONING OF THE THREE EQUAL SEGMENTS FOR THE COUNCIL; AND PROBING FOR U.S. RESPONSE IF THE AGREEMENTS WERE TO BREAK DOWN.

I BELIEVE I MADE SOME HEADWAY IN MY ANSWERS TO THESE AND THE OTHER QUESTIONS. MY GENERAL POINT WAS THAT UNITY BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES, VIGILANCE CONCERNING THE AGREEMENT, AND THE SELF-DETERMINATION AND ASSURANCE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WOULD PROVE TO BE THE CRUCIAL INGREDIENTS. THE REMAINING NVA FORCES WERE CERTAIN TO BE REDUCED IN STRENGTH. IN THE ABSENCE OF REINFORCEMENTS, I POINTED OUT THAT THE NVA FORCES WERE GREATLY WEAKENED AND COULD NOT BE REINFORCED, AND THAT REDUCTIONS UNDER THE DEMOBILIZATION PROVISION WOULD WORK TO THE GVN'S ADVANTAGE BECAUSE OF ITS LARGER BASE. I EXPLAINED THAT WITH THEIR MUCH LARGER ARMY AND THE EQUIPMENT AUGMENTATION THAT WE HAVE PLANNED BEFORE THE AGREEMENT THE REPLACEMENT PROVISIONS WOULD ALSO WORK TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. ON THE POLITICAL ISSUES I STRESSED THE COMMUNISTS' COMPLETE COLLAPSE AND HOW A SELF-CONFIDENT, DETERMINED POLITICAL EFFORT BY THE GVN SHOULD GAIN THEM PREDOMINANCE IN THE COMING POLITICAL STRUGGLE. THE SOUTHERN COMMUNIST CADRES SHOULD BE TOTALLY DEMORALIZED BY THIS AGREEMENT. AND I EMPHASIZED THAT IF THE AGREEMENTS WERE VIOLATED THE PRESIDENT WOULD TAKE STRONG RETALIATORY ACTION, CITING HIS PAST RECORD IN A MUCH MORE DIFFICULT ELECTION YEAR. I EXPLAINED THE COMMUNISTS COULD FOLLOW TWO ROADS. IF THEY TRIED ANOTHER OFFENSIVE NEXT SPRING WE WOULD CERTAINLY REACT STRONGLY. IF ON THE OTHER HAND THEY WERE GENUINELY OPTING FOR RECONSTRUCTION IN THE NORTH, THIS FACT PLUS THE NON-REINFORCEMENT PROVISIONS WOULD PROBABLY PRODUCE UNILATERAL NVA WITHDRAWALS FROM THE SOUTH.

OVERALL I THINK WE MADE SOME PROGRESS. WE NOW FACE THE DELICATE TASK OF GIVING THE GVN A SENSE OF PARTICIPATION WITHOUT AT THE SAME TIME UPSETTING THE APPLE CART IN HANOI.

ABRAMS WHO WAS SILENT THE FIRST DAY, MADE A VERY USEFUL INTERVENTION TODAY AND HAS GENERALLY BEEN VERY HELPFUL.

2. ALTHOUGH THIEU HAS NOT YET AGREED TO THE SETTLEMENT, I BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE START MOVING EQUIPMENT IMMEDIATELY SINCE I THINK WE MUST HAVE IT ALL HERE BY NOVEMBER 1 LOCAL TIME. IF THE DEAL SHOULD COME APART AT THE LAST MOMENT WE COULD STILL STOP THE SHIPMENTS AND ALL WE WOULD HAVE DONE IS TO STRENGTHEN THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE A LITTLE PREMATURELY. ACCORDINGLY I RECOMMEND PUTTING THE OPERATION INTO HIGH GEAR WITH DAN MURPHY.

3. I TALKED TO WEYAND AND ABRAMS ABOUT MOVING OUR EQUIPMENT OUT OF HERE WITHIN 60 DAYS AND RELOCATING ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT IN THAILAND AND ELSEWHERE. I AM TOTALLY PERSUADED THAT ONE MAN HAS TO BE IN CHARGE OF THIS OPERATION AND THAT IT SHOULD BE ABRAMS. WEYAND AGREES. IF WE PERMIT THE JCS TO STUDY THE PROBLEM, WE WILL HAVE THE SAME FIASCO AS WITH THE BOMBING, ALL THE MORE SO SINCE ADMIRAL GAYLOR IS HOPELESS. PLEASE TALK TO THE PRESIDENT AND GET AN ORDER ISSUED WHICH WILL GIVE ABRAMS COMPLETE CHARGE OF THIS OPERATION. I BELIEVE WE CAN RELOCATE ESSENTIAL INSTALLATIONS AND HEADQUARTERS SO AS TO GIVE OURSELVES A SUBSTANTIAL CAPABILITY IF WE HAVE TO REACT TO COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE AGREEMENT.

WARM REGARDS.

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